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Washington Report

By FULTON LEWIS, JR.

The hush-hush Central Intelligence Agency, long shrouded in such super-secrecy as to defy all attempts to investigate it, finally is getting a thorough going-over with reportedly surprising results.

Virtually nothing has leaked to the public as to exactly what the investigators are finding. However, they have expanded their probe well beyond their original scope and now are looking into the National Security Council, the top planning agency of the federal government, and special representatives are en route to the Far East to delve into CIA operations there.

Various members of Congress have contended that CIA is extravagantly wasteful and inefficient and has on its payrolls an unknown number of persons of highly dubious security status. However, every motion toward a congressional investigation has been smothered before it could get off the ground on the contention that CIA work is too secret and important to permit such an inquiry.

The present study is being conducted by a "task force" of the Hoover Commission on Government Reorganization, set up last July and headed by retired Gen. Mark Clark. Originally it was scheduled to report on its findings last month, but the time was extended because of the unrealized magnitude of the task and no report now appears possible until May, at the earliest.

Former President Herbert Hoover, chairman of the full commission, said in announcing the task force's creation that it would study CIA's "structure and administration." A few days later Clark said its primary aim would be to "check the operating procedures" but that "the type of study we are going to make should uncover any persons in CIA with subversive tendencies."

President Eisenhower and CIA Director Allen W. Dulles, brother of the Secretary of State, both publicly promised full cooperation by the entire executive branch of the government and by the CIA in particular.

However, in mid-October, the



White House announced that a special four-man study group had been established by the President to inquire into CIA operations and that it had just submitted its report—which, incidentally, still has not been made public.

This group was headed by retired Lt. Gen. James H. Doolittle. There was widespread belief that it had been set up for the specific purpose of forestalling the investigation by Clark's "task force," if the administration had that objective in mind it failed. The group has gone right ahead with its study as if the Doolittle quartet had never existed.

The White House, disclosing the Doolittle project, released what it said was a summary of its report. In substance, it was that CIA was doing a good job but that there were "important areas" in which its organization, administration and operations "could and should be improved."

No elaboration ever has been made on these anonymous "important areas." Rumors are current, however, that the criticisms in the report itself were far more serious and were given far more emphasis than would be gleaned from the White House "summary."

Knowledge that the Clark group has extended its probe to include the National Security Council came as somewhat of a surprise to many observers. However, inquiries make it clear that CIA actually is pretty much a creature of the NSC; that the NSC itself does have a substantial staff, and that CIA and NSC are so closely intermingled as to be virtually inextricable. Each NSC meeting, for example, is opened with an intelligence summary by Dulles.

The investigative team going to the Far East apparently has what amounts to carte blanche orders to probe all facets of CIA field operations in that part of the world, including such points as their efficiency and effectiveness and the characters of the personnel carrying them out.

Comparable teams either have conducted or are conducting similar studies in other foreign areas.

The CIA could stand a rather thorough overhauling in many respects. If, as appears to be the case, the Clark group is sincere in its efforts to find those respects and then to get something done about them, more power to them.

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